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ABSTRACT

Based on Montessori's ideas about children's innate capabilities and potential, this book encourages restructuring the home environment to provide children, especially preschool children, with opportunities for self-directed activities and personal autonomy. In each of the chapters, a different room is examined as to how it could be redesigned to allow children to direct their movements in purposeful activity, working toward perfection without external correction or prodding. For example, the book notes that in the kitchen, children of any age can participate, preparing food, setting the table, cleaning and washing the dishes. Showing the child how to do activities by demonstrating movements that can be imitated nurtures the child's inner need to improve and perfect. The dining room can be used as a formal space where children learn conversation, grace, and courtesy. The bathroom offers experiences of personal care: bathing, dressing, combing, and brushing teeth, activities that children can perform independently when provided with materials that are scaled down to child-size. The bedroom can be designed for maximum independence, in terms of the child's need to learn by doing things by him- or herself, often with the parent close by. The living room can provide opportunities for adults and children to do things together, such as listening to music or playing with a selected group of toys. In addition, children can display their collections in this room. Finally, the outdoors should be as accessible to the child as the indoors. Whether by tending a garden or raking leaves, care of the outdoor environment and of growing things promotes mental as well physical development. (AA)

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